

Testimony of Douglas Rand
Student, Yale Law School¹
In Support of Raised Bill No. 6437
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Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee: Many thanks for giving me the opportunity to speak in support of Raised Bill No. 6437, the bill to elect the President of the United States by National Popular Vote.

My name is Doug Rand, and I am a second-year law student at Yale Law School. My wife Dafna and I live and vote in New Haven, in the districts of Senator Martin Looney² and Representative Gary Holder-Winfield.³

As you know, the National Popular Vote bill would guarantee the Presidency of the United States to the candidate who earns the most votes nationwide. I would like to talk about how profound and how powerful this change would be for the ordinary people of Connecticut.

As I'm sure you remember, Super Tuesday in Connecticut was thrilling this past year—there was enormous grassroots political activity, and lots of excitement, because every vote mattered. My wife and I walked up Orange Street to our local polling place, and we cast our ballots, and then it occurred to us: What if we want to do more than vote? What if we want to really get involved in the general election, go door to door, and talk to people?

We realized the sad fact that Super Tuesday was the last day that Connecticut mattered, in the eyes of either Barack Obama or John McCain. If we wanted to make a difference in this race, we'd have to go to a battleground state, talk to strangers in an unfamiliar neighborhood, and vote absentee on Election Day.

So I ended up traveling down to Florida to do voter protection work. Then my wife and I spent the final days before Nov. 4 in Philadelphia, helping drive voters to the polls. It felt good to participate in the political process, but we wished that we could have had the same impact back in our own neighborhood, in New Haven, talking to our friends and neighbors about the presidential race and other contests all the way down the ballot.

To me, person-to-person participation is the most exciting benefit of electing the President by a national popular vote. When Connecticut voters know that they really matter, they're more likely to get involved locally in a presidential campaign. Once they get involved in a presidential campaign, they're more likely to get involved in the political life of their communities. And most importantly, they'll be able to tell their

¹ The author prepared this testimony through the Yale Law School Legislative Advocacy Clinic, under the supervision of J. L. Pottenger, Jr., Nathan Baker Clinical Professor of Law.

² State Senate District 11.

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children why they're working with their neighbors, and why this matters to the town, to the state, and to the nation.

This is common sense, but it's also backed up by research. Voter turnout is significantly lower in states where voters don't think that their votes make a difference.⁴ Connecticut in particular has experienced one of the nation's sharpest declines in participation among young voters—since 1972, voting by 18-24 year olds has plunged more than 28%.⁵ And research also shows that when people don't form the habit of voting when they're young, they're unlikely to participate later in life.⁶

The National Popular Vote bill enjoys overwhelming support from Connecticut voters.⁷ It's a very simple agreement, with the same language in every state. It costs nothing to implement—not a dime of state funds, and not a second more than the time it takes to vote yes.

But the results will be tremendous: Once every vote matters, once Connecticut matters, our communities will be immeasurably stronger.

Many thanks again for your time, and I am happy to address any of your questions.

⁴ In 2008, average voter turnout in the 15 most contested states was 67%, while average turnout in the remaining 35 states was only 61%. FairVote, "2008's Shrinking Battleground" (Dec. 4, 2008). Available at: <http://fairvote.org/tracker/?page=27&pressmode=showspecific&showarticle=230>.

⁵ Voter turnout among 18-24 year olds in Connecticut was 57% in 1972, and only 41% in 2004. The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE), "Youth Voter Turnout in the States during the 2004 Presidential and 2002 Midterm Elections," Table 1 (July 2005). Available at: http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS_04_state_vote.pdf. Youth voter turnout declined further in Connecticut between 2004 and 2008. CIRCLE, State Voting Map. Available at: http://www.civicyouth.org/Map_new.htm.

⁶ FairVote, "The Shrinking Battleground: The 2008 Presidential Election and Beyond." (Takoma Park, MD: The Center for Voting and Democracy, 2005). Available at: <http://www.fairvote.org/shrinking?page=1729>. Citing Mark N. Franklin, *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁷ National Popular Vote, Inc., "73% of Connecticut Voters Support a National Popular Vote for President in April 2008 Poll" (2008). Available at: http://www.nationalpopularvote.com/pages/polls.php#CT_2008APR.